

29 December 1988

NOTE FOR: Bob Gates
FROM: Fritz Ermarth
SUBJECT: NSC ADP and Intelligence Support

One of the things you should take a bit of time to do, once you get downtown, is to survey the ADP and electronic message support now available to you, Brent, and the NSC Staff. If you check out the Sit Room, the new "crisis management" apparatus, and the work stations of the individual staffers, you'll find a world quite different from that of the late 1970s.

There are some down sides. The crisis management support system is overengineered and, so far as I know, not much used. Electronic mail and messaging can induce some timid souls to hide in their offices, cultivating the illusion that they are dealing with the real world; this happened to Poindexter.

Yet there are some real strengths and hidden powers available to you. For one thing, any staffer can get more news and raw intelligence faster than almost any intelligence analyst in town. Unfortunately, this contributes to the irrelevance of most current intelligence analysis and publications. On the other hand, if we found ways to wire ourselves together, the synergism of high-level policy staffing and quality intelligence analysis could be greatly strengthened.

You and Brent both know how, if well used, intelligence analytic support from this building -- be it DI or NIO in flavor -- can be a "force multiplier" for your offices, especially in bureaucratic wars with the departmental behemoths. The NSC staff will never be big or powerful enough to do without such support, and, as I understand it, the aim is to reduce its present size.

Therefore, it seems to me, the time is right to look at new ways to organize and communicate direct support from this building to the NSC. At any rate, the new electronic environment dictates some review our current intelligence products and methods. In the context of such a review, broader opportunities to improve our service are sure to be discovered.

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